

In addition to being an accomplished professional, Meryl Feren always took time to assist in her husband's political campaigns and public service as well. Her husband knew he could always rely on her for advice, enthusiasm on the campaign trail, and an undying commitment to his goals in public service. Besides campaigning for Mayor Feren, Meryl was a board member of the West Broward Democratic Club, where she volunteered in numerous community initiatives.

Mrs. Feren's charity work included helping out with Kids Crusaders, an organization for abused children. Also, Feren always found time to help an organization known as City of Hope, a fundraising group that sought money to fund a California research hospital that studies illnesses such as cancer. Clearly, Mrs. Feren placed a priority on volunteering her time for worthy causes, and she set out to assist others in need.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honor to stand here today and remember the life of an exemplary citizen of South Florida, one who remained devoted to her fellow neighbors and family, and always sought a better quality of life for her community. Her legacy as a wife, mother, and activist for a number of causes will surely last a lifetime. Mrs. Feren is survived by her husband Steve Feren; son Adam Feren; her mother, Anne Mallin of Sunrise; and a sister, Lori Mallin of Sunrise.

HONORING DR. JAMES L.
WILLIAMSON

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the distinguished career of Dr. James L. Williamson. At Baylor University in my hometown, he is not just a teacher, but he is also a mentor and an exemplar of professionalism upon the educational landscape. His service in the development of educational leadership, founded in the principle of integrity and manifested in research and the identification of best practice, continues to positively impact children. His passion for education has directly resulted in a growing association of principals, superintendents, and other school leaders who mirror his model of servant leadership. As a beacon of guidance and hope, Dr. Williamson has dedicated his life to creating a covenant between intellectual scholarship and the call to serve in building foundations for learning, leadership, and life. That is why I rise today to honor the dedication and service Dr. Williamson has given to both Baylor University and to the education profession.

CONTINUOUS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
CONCERNS IN ARMENIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in my capacity as Chairman of the Helsinki Commission to voice concern over Arme-

nia's refusal to register select religious groups and the continuing harassment of certain religious communities, actions which violate Armenia's commitments to religious freedom as a participating State in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Honoring the commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE documents would ensure Armenia upholds the freedom of the individual to profess and practice religion or belief, alone or in community with others.

With respect to registration, Armenian law requires all religious communities and organizations, other than the Armenian Apostolic Church, to register with the government. Obtaining registration is critical if a religious community wants to carry out basic functions, like renting property, publishing newspapers or magazines, broadcasting programs on television or radio, or officially sponsoring the visas of co-religionists or visitors.

To acquire registration, a petitioning religious organization must obtain an "expert opinion" from the government, in which four questions from Article 14 of the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations Act must be affirmatively answered: (1) Is the religion based on a historically canonized holy book? (2) Does its faith belong to a system of modern worldwide religious church communities? (3) Is it of a purely spiritual orientation, not created for the pursuit of material goals? (4) Does it have at least 200 believing members, not including minors? A negative finding by the government on any of the four questions will terminate the registration application.

This type of approval system is extremely problematic, as it places the government in the role of determining what is or is not a religion, allowing it to make highly subjective decisions. For example, the government refuses to recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses as an official religion, despite having more than 6,000 Armenian members. Other small groups, including approximately 50 Baptist communities, are unable to pass the numerical threshold, so are not qualified to apply for registration. As a result these groups are indiscriminately denied basic rights enjoyed by those which have the government's stamp of approval.

Last September, Prime Minister Andranik Markarian reportedly stated that the Armenian Government must curb the activities of minority religious communities, even if these actions violate Council of Europe obligations. Mr. Speaker, considering this type of bias, I urge the Government of Armenia to revamp the registration process to prevent arbitrary or politicized decisions. Abolishing the registration requirement and ensuring any system facilitates, rather than hampers, the free exercise of religious freedom for individuals and communities, by methodically granting legal status to groups which seek registration would help bring Armenian policy into conformity with OSCE commitments.

Even more alarming is the Armenian Government's continued imprisonment of conscientious objectors, particularly from the Jehovah's Witnesses faith. According to the State Department's 2002 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for Armenia, military and civilian security officials subject Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse to serve in the military to harsh treatment, because their refusal is seen as a threat to Armenia's sur-

vival. One particular example is the case of Araik Bedjanyan, sentenced on July 2nd to 1½ years in a labor camp for refusing military service. Mr. Bedjanyan was sentenced under Article 75 of the criminal code, for "evasion of active military service." There are currently 24 Jehovah's Witnesses serving sentences for being conscientious objectors on religious grounds. Suren Hakopyan and Artur Torosyan, whom police arrested in Yerevan on July 3, are currently awaiting trial along with six others for their refusal to serve in the military. Seven more Jehovah's Witnesses are reportedly under house arrest for the same "crime." Despite Article 75 being replaced by Article 327 in the new criminal code, the amendment only reduces the potential sentence from three years to two.

One of the conditions for Armenia's admission to the Council of Europe in January 2001 involved the adoption of a law on alternative military service conforming to European standards within three years. However, while drafts continue to circulate, no laws have been passed that provide for alternative civilian service outside the framework of the army. In the meantime, conscientious objectors continue to receive harsh sentences. Should the Armenian Parliament pass such a law, the service length should not be punitive in nature, but rather be comparable to military service requirements.

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I urge the Armenian Government to abide by its OSCE commitments regarding religious freedom. Armenia should overhaul its registration scheme, dropping the registration requirement, and liberalize its system for bestowing legal personality to religious communities and organizations. Furthermore, all Jehovah's Witnesses currently imprisoned for "evasion of military service" should be unconditionally freed, and a law in line with Council of Europe standards for alternative military service should be passed as soon as possible.

RETIREMENT OF EVE BUTLER-
GEE, CHIEF JOURNAL CLERK

HON. JIM RYUN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand before you today to honor Mrs. Eve Butler-Gee, a Virginian by birth but a Kansan by marriage, on her 20 years of service in the House of Representatives. Eve's husband, Tom, was raised in Leavenworth, Kansas, and his mother, Gertrude, still lives there as a constituent of mine. In addition to seeing Eve on the House floor, we have run into each other at social events as we are both members of the Kansas Society.

In 1987, Eve was appointed as the Minority Enrolling Clerk of the House by Minority Leader Bob Michel. In 1995, she became the first woman appointed as Chief Journal Clerk of the House, and in this position she has faithfully served for the past 8 years.

Eve's many years of service were performed with character worthy of praise and emulation. Her attentiveness and thoroughness were proved by successfully fulfilling her duties as Journal Clerk, duties which require great attention to details. Her initiative, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness were proved by